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ABSTRACT

In spring 1983, a study was conducted at Cerritos College to gain a better understanding of students who dropped all of their classes. The study involved exit surveys administered as part of the official drop process, exit surveys used during the graduation check process, and an analysis of institutional data on the personal and academic characteristics of spring 1983 students. Results were compared with findings from a similar study conducted in 1980. Study findings, based on survey responses from 376 dropouts and 268 graduates, included the following: (1) students dropped out due to job conflict, personal reasons, illness, or dissatisfaction; (2) 26% of the dropouts originally came to Cerritos to prepare for transfer, 26% to train for a job, 23% to explore a new career or subject, and 18% for self-enrichment; (3) since spring 1980, dropouts' values had become more pragmatic and less humanitarian; (4) dropouts consistently attributed less value to educational outcomes than graduates; (5) 67% of the dropouts felt well prepared by the college and 70% were very satisfied with the instruction they received; (6) graduates were more familiar and more satisfied with support services than dropouts; (7) 94% of the dropouts said they would recommend Cerritos to another student; (8) 61% of the dropouts did not feel they had achieved their goals while at Cerritos; and (9) compared to graduates, dropouts more frequently tended to enroll full-time, be new or re-admit students, be older females, and have fewer units earned. (LL)

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STUDY OF STUDENTS LEAVING CERRITOS COLLEGE

Spring 1983

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JC 830 401

STUDY OF STUDENTS LEAVING CERRITOS COLLEGE

Spring 1983

Late in the 1983 spring semester, the Cerritos College Institutional Research Office conducted a study of students who dropped all classes. The overall purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of those students who, by the College's perspective, were not well served or successful -- dropouts. The study was undertaken to answer questions often asked about dropouts, namely:

1. Why do students drop out?
2. Why did these students originally come to Cerritos?
3. What are the educational values held by dropouts?
4. Do dropouts feel well prepared by the College?
5. Are dropouts aware of the support services available?
6. Are dropouts satisfied with the instruction received?
7. Do dropouts leave because they are dissatisfied with Cerritos?
8. How are dropouts different from students who complete classes?

The study used several measures and comparisons to address the above questions. These included:

1. Exit surveys administered as part of the official drop process to students dropping all classes within the last three days of the official withdrawal period, at the 14th week (administered to Spring 1980 and Spring 1983 dropouts).
2. Exit surveys administered as part of the official graduation check process to potential graduates (administered to Spring 1980 graduates).
3. Institutional database on students (selected elements, Spring 1983):
    a. gender
    b. age
    c. marital status
    d. ethnicity
    e. visa status
    f. stated educational goal
    g. enrollment status
    h. course load (full- or part-time)
    i. units earned
    j. attendance schedule (day, evening or both)

Answers to the above questions are provided along with the supporting data.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT DROPOUTS
(from A Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983)

Dropouts, students who withdraw from all classes, comprise about 16% of the total student enrollment.

WHY DO STUDENTS DROP OUT?

- 7% because of job conflict
- 5% due to personal reasons
- 2% due to illness
- 2% because of dissatisfaction, probation, or other reasons

WHY DID THESE STUDENTS ORIGINALLY COME TO CERRITOS?

- 26% to prepare for transfer
- 26% to train for a new job or upgrade current job
- 23% to explore a new career or subject area
- 18% for interest and self-enrichment
- 8% for reasons other than above (incl. undecided)

WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL VALUES HELD BY DROPOUTS?

- dropouts hold highest value for learning about careers, job skills, and for gaining self-understanding
- value for self-understanding, however, has dramatically dropped in recent years
- recently, dropouts values have become more pragmatic and less humanitarian
- dropouts consistently attribute less value to the outcomes of education than do graduates

DO DROPOUTS FEEL WELL PREPARED BY THE COLLEGE?

- about two-thirds feel prepared; however, graduates are more likely to feel prepared than dropouts
- dropouts feel best prepared with what they learned about careers, job skills, and self-understanding
- recently, dropouts report being better prepared in communication skills

ARE DROPOUTS AWARE OF THE SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM?

- dropouts are not nearly as familiar with the support services as are graduates
- the most frequently used services are the LMC and Counseling
- highest ratings were given to the LMC
- dropouts are less satisfied than graduates with the support services received
- recently, dropouts' ratings for Counseling and Financial Aid have improved

ARE DROPOUTS SATISFIED WITH THE INSTRUCTION THEY RECEIVED?

- 7 out of 10 are very satisfied
- dropouts, however, are less satisfied than graduates
- dropouts do not feel instructors are as interested in students as do graduates
- dropouts are also less satisfied than graduates with the content and grading of courses

DO DROPOUTS LEAVE BECAUSE THEY ARE DISSATISFIED WITH CERRITOS?

- it appears they are more dissatisfied with themselves
- 94% would recommend Cerritos to another student seeking similar classes or programs
- 3 out of 5, however, do not feel they achieved their goal while at Cerritos

HOW ARE DROPOUTS DIFFERENT FROM STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE CLASSES?

Dropouts more frequently tend to:

- enroll full-time
- be new or re-admit students
- be older females
- have fewer units earned
- enroll for job skills
- avoid enrolling solely in night courses

STUDENT EXIT SURVEY
Spring 1983

Student Characteristics: (N = 376)

Male	163		
Female	213		
White	186	Black	27
Hispanic	80	Indian	2
Asian/Pacific Islands	43	Non Resident Alien	30
		Other	8

As you see it now, after attending Cerritos College, what was your PRIMARY purpose for attending this community college?

Circle Only One		GOAL ACHIEVED?	
		yes	no
a. Exploration of new career or academic areas	84		
b. Preparation for immediate entry into a career	53		
c. Preparation for transfer to a 4-year institution	94		
d. Update skills for a job currently held	39	130	204
e. Interest and self-enrichment	65		
f. Undecided	14		
g. Other	14		

Main reason for leaving Cerritos College: (Circle Only One)

a. Completed program	9	f. Unsatisfied with classes	14
b. Transferring to 4-year school	13	g. Personal reasons	99
c. Academic or progress probation	2	h. Recieved degree, but not leaving Cerritos College	0
d. Job conflict	157		
e. Illness	36	i. Other	36

Please rate Cerritos College on the following items: (✓ your response)

	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know
a. Quality of instruction	69	243	50	8	4
b. Grading and testing	42	231	72	7	21
c. Instructor interest in students	72	184	93	13	8
d. Content of courses	65	207	77	10	9
e. Instructional materials (books, manuals, etc.)	62	204	79	10	12

Please rate the following services of Cerritos College: (✓ your response)

	Not Asked	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know Never Used
a. Financial Aid/EOPS		14	66	30	11	247
b. Job Placement Office		15	71	39	11	234
c. Counseling		27	128	66	15	135
d. Student Activities		23	112	41	3	191
e. Library		49	173	40	3	106
f. Tutoring		17	74	28	1	251
g. Women's Center	206	7	23	5	1	132

Please rate how well Cerritos College prepared you in each of the following areas (left side); then indicate the value you place on each area (right side). (✓ your response)

COLLEGE PREPARED ME						VALUE TO ME			
Not Asked	Very Well	Well	Fairly Well	Poorly		Not Asked	Great Value	Val.	Some Val.	Little Value
206	15	48	36	4	Transfer to 4-yr College	206	33	36	25	12
	49	140	89	17	Job knowledge and skills		107	122	46	16
	67	144	64	17	Getting along with people		104	120	46	19
	57	137	73	19	Self-understanding		99	128	53	9
	65	128	69	28	Knowledge about career opportunities in your field		118	111	45	14
	49	146	85	12	Communication skills (oral and written)		96	129	49	13

Would you recommend Cerritos College to a person seeking to complete the same program you studied? (✓ your response)

329 Yes 23 No

CHANGES IN DROPOUTS' VALUES AND COLLEGE PREPARATION

	DROPOUTS		
	Spring '80 (N = 138)	Spring '83 (N = 295)	Change
Job Knowledge and Skills:			
Valuable to Student	76.8%	78.7%	+1.9
Student Felt Prepared	65.4	64.1	-1.3
Career Knowledge:			
Valuable to Students	76.9	79.5	+2.6
Student Felt Prepared	63.9	66.5	+2.6
Communication Skills:			
Valuable to Student	76.8	78.3	+1.5
Student Felt Prepared	63.8	66.8	+3.0
Getting Along With Others:			
Valuable to Student	84.4	77.5	-6.9
Student Felt Prepared	72.2	72.3	+0.1
Self-Understanding:			
Valuable to Student	83.5	78.6	-4.9
Student Felt Prepared	67.7	67.9	+0.2

There has been a significant change in dropouts' value ratings and preparedness ratings over the last four years (Spring '80 to Spring '83).

1. Dropouts' value for Career Knowledge, Job Knowledge and Skills, and Communication Skills has increased.
2. Dropouts' value for Getting Along with Others and Self-Understanding has dramatically decreased.
3. Fewer dropouts feel prepared in Job Knowledge and Skills.
4. More dropouts feel prepared in Communication Skills and Career Knowledge.
5. While dropouts' value for Job Knowledge and Skills has increased, their preparedness ratings for Job Knowledge and Skills have dropped.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GRADUATES' AND DROPOUTS'
VALUES AND COLLEGE PREPARATION

	Graduates (N = 234)	Dropouts (N = 295)	Difference
Job Knowledge and Skills:			
Valuable to Student	93.2%	78.7%	+14.5
Student Felt Prepared	87.2	64.1	+23.1
Career Knowledge:			
Valuable to Student	90.7	79.5	+11.2
Student Felt Prepared	85.2	66.5	+18.7
Communication Skills:			
Valuable to Student	93.2	78.3	+14.9
Student Felt Prepared	91.5	66.8	+24.7
Getting Along With Others:			
Valuable to Student	92.3	77.5	+14.8
Student Felt Prepared	88.7	72.3	+16.4
Self-Understanding:			
Valuable to Student	92.1	78.6	+13.5
Student Felt Prepared	87.4	67.9	+19.5

There are significant differences between graduates' and dropouts' value ratings and preparation ratings.

1. In general, graduates attribute more value and feel better prepared in each of the above than do dropouts.
2. Far more graduates than dropouts feel prepared with respect to Communication Skills and Job Knowledge and Skills.
3. Graduates particularly attribute more value to Communication Skills, Getting Along with Others, and Job Knowledge and Skills than do dropouts.
4. For all students, the greatest discrepancy between value ratings and preparation ratings was for Job Knowledge and Skills.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

CHANGES IN DROPOUTS' HIGH RATINGS OF

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Support Services (In utilization rank order)	PERCENT GIVING HIGH RATINGS Spring '80 (N = 205)	Spring '83 (N = 360)	Change
Learning Materials Center	62%	59%	-3
Counseling	36	41	+5
Student Activities	39	36	-3
Job Placement	30	23	-7
Financial Aid	17	21	+4
Tutoring	25	24	-1

There have been significant changes in the ratings dropouts give to the Student Support Services.

1. The LMC is frequently used and is consistently given high ratings; however, the LMC's ratings have dropped slightly over the last four years.

2. Dropouts also frequently use Counseling; high ratings for Counseling have increased.

3. Financial Aid high ratings have also increased but few dropouts report using the service.

4. Job Placement is not used frequently and ratings have dramatically dropped.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GRADUATES' AND DROPOUTS'
HIGH RATINGS OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Support Services (In utilization rank order)	PERCENT GIVING HIGH RATINGS Graduates (N = 268)	Dropouts (N = 360)	Difference
Learning Materials Center	81%	59%	-22
Counseling	68	41	-27
Student Activities	64	36	-28
Job Placement	47	23	-24
Tutoring	48	24	-24
Financial Aid	41	21	-20

There are significant differences between the ratings given by graduates and dropouts to Student Support Services.

1. Across the board, graduates give Student Support Services higher ratings than do dropouts (graduates also report greater use of the services).

2. Graduates and dropouts alike give highest ratings to the LMC.

3. Graduates give far more high ratings to Counseling and Student Activities than do dropouts.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

CHANGES IN DROPOUTS' HIGH RATINGS OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

ASPECTS OF INSTRUCTION:	PERCENT GIVING HIGH RATINGS Spring '80 (N = 205)	 Spring '83 (N = 376)	Change
Quality of Instruction	81%	83%	+2
Grading and Testing	71	73	+2
Content of Courses	76	72	-4
Instructional Materials	65	71	+6
Instructor Interest	68	68	Ø

There have been some changes in the ratings dropouts give to the aspects of instruction:

1. Dropouts' high ratings of instructional materials have significantly increased.

2. Dropouts' high ratings of the content of courses at Cerritos have decreased slightly.

3. Ratings of all other aspects of instruction have not changed much over the last four years.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRADUATES' AND DROPOUTS'
HIGH RATINGS OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

ASPECTS OF INSTRUCTION:	PERCENT GIVING HIGH RATINGS Graduates (N = 268)	 Dropouts (N = 376)	 Difference
Quality of Instruction	88%	83%	-5
Grading and Testing	81	73	-8
Content of Courses	81	72	-9
Instructional Materials	75	71	-4
Instructor Interest	79	68	-11

There are significant differences between graduates' and dropouts' ratings of instruction:

1. Overall both graduates and dropouts give high ratings to each aspect of instruction (above).

2. Across the board, however, graduates give each aspect of instruction higher ratings than do dropouts.

3. The quality of instruction at Cerritos is given the highest of ratings by both groups.

4. The greatest difference between graduates' and dropouts' ratings was with respect to the instructor's interest in the student.

5. The smallest difference between graduates' and dropouts' ratings was with respect to the instruction materials used in courses.

Source: Study of Students Leaving Cerritos College, Spring 1983.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMPLETERS AND DROPOUTS
Spring 1983

	Completers (N = 18,674)	Dropouts (N = 3,663)
Course Load:		
Full-time	16%	46%
Part-time	84	54
Enrollment Status:		
New	14	19
Continuing	66	52
Readmit	14	20
Transfer	6	9
Attendance Schedule:		
Day courses only	31	45
Night courses only	53	12
Both	16	43
Units Earned:		
0 - 29.5 units	66	71
30 - 59.5	17	11
60+, nongraduate	11	11
A.A.	2	2
B.A.	3	4
M.A.	< 1	1
Educational Goal:		
Transfer to 4-year	30	22
A.A., Transfer	8	7
A.A.	21	20
Certificate	9	10
Job Skills	32	41
Gender:		
Male	48	45
Female	52	55
Age:		
Under 21 years	33	24
21 - 24	22	24
25 - 29	16	20
30 - 34	10	12
35 - 49	14	15
50+	5	5

	Completers (N = 18,074)	Dropouts (N = 3,663)
Marital Status:		
Single	60	55
Married	31	33
Divorced	6	9
Separated	2	2
Widowed	1	1
Ethnicity:		
White, Nonhispanic	44	45
Hispanic	18	18
Oriental	7	6
Black	5	5
Filipino	3	3
American Indian	2	2
Other	2	2
No response	19	19
Visa Status:		
U.S. Citizen	86	88
Immigrant	12	11
Refugee	1	< 1
Student	< 1	< 1
Other	< 1	< 1

When compared to completers, dropouts more frequently tend to:

- enroll full-time
- be new or readmit students
- enroll for job skills
- have less than 30 units earned
- not enroll in evening only courses
- be female, and older

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
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